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## ATTIC ODYSSEY — LETTERS TELL A TALE OR TWO

—Winifred Wardle Fiero

The lid on Grandpa's old pine chest creaked open after I took a chisel to the rusty lock. There lay hundreds of letters bedded down for many a year. A few light sleepers among them were already peeking out from their envelopes. I peeked too. Post marks paced history from whale oil lamps to electric lights, from horseback and "shanks' ponies" to railroads, autos and airplanes, from sails to steamboats.

It boggled my imagination to see place names from far corners of the United States and much of the Far East. The only writer I had trouble linking closely to this grandfather I knew so well in his later years was a mystery Civil War soldier. But he was mentioned in a letter to Grandpa and had left a chest marked Pelham that sat in my cellar as if he owned it.

My attic had become a veritable ghetto of generations past and present. Ostracized from current living, chests and boxes had proliferated and vied with old furniture to make a path through the attic one vast obstacle course. My grandchildren are here-with warned. They are lineal descendants of packrats.

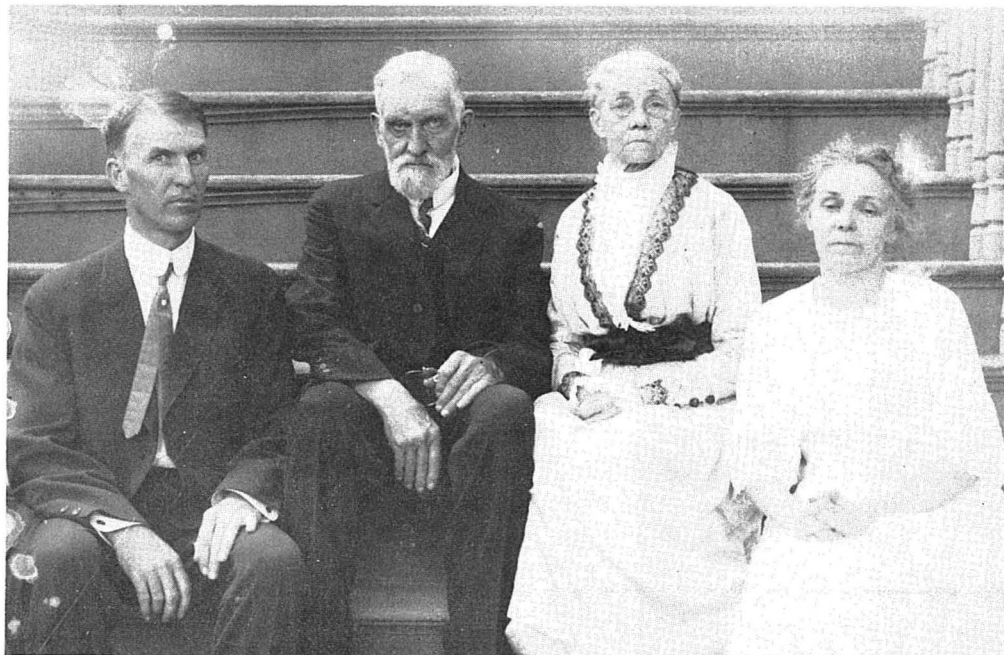
But it was a day of autumn blue skies. One glance out the attic balcony door, and I escaped over the Rip Van Winkle Bridge to a quiet knoll beside Chancellor Robert Livingston's recently restored Manor House. He was the Patroon responsible in 1710 for feeding the Palatines, French Huguenots and

other refugees that Queen Anne had sponsored in a kindly but ill-advised venture to the New World.

There had been ten ships and 3000 persons who embarked toward the end of January for the Hudson River. It was the largest exodus that ever embarked to a new land in colonial days. Their voyage was one of the most terrible in history. There were 470 who died at sea before they landed at both the East Camp and West Camp more than 100 miles north of New York City. But what was worse than all, according to Brink's History, a semi-serfdom awaited them. Their land had once been the garden spot of Europe. No one who has ever seen the documents signed by these refugees from the Palatine needs to be told they came from a land of school houses. They were signatures of hands that were used to pens.

Bark and log huts were built for winter quarters. Here they shivered and suffered. But they built a church that very winter. And in January, three months after landing they had a school house . . . the relative needs of mind, body and soul were never more clearly seen, nor more quickly provided for than by these exiles — not even by the Pilgrims at Plymouth.

To the West I searched the long ridge that carried the Old King's Road on its back, hoping sharp eyes could pick out at least the slender spire of the lovely old Catsbaan Church, but the trees were too tall. A little north of it would be the land of the old Van Gelder Farm. James Harvey and his three older



James Harvey Van Gelder and Rebecca Pine Van Gelder with their two children, Arthur Pine Van Gelder and Carrie Van Gelder Wardle on the occasion of the Van Gelder's 50th wedding anniversary in 1914.

Van Gelder brothers were born there. His mother was the great granddaughter of Christian Myer, best known of all the early Palatines. He had had 25 sons and grandsons in the Revolution and signed the Articles of Association which were an attempt at reconciliation, not a threat of separation from the King.

Like all good rivers this so-called Rhine of America, at my feet, reflected the bright blue skies above. The Catskills with their famous profile of the Old Man of the Mountains made a darker backdrop. That day I was not distracted by such awesome beauty. The letters still haunted me. I headed back to Catskill.

Grandpa was sixteen when he left for the Seminary. Loaded down with his carpet bag, and once with a five-foot rosewood melodeon, he set out for the Seminary at Charlottesville way back of our mountains. It was a roundabout trip by way of Albany and probably by boat. From there he went by stagecoach. William Myer, his next older brother, was an artist when he was not a dirt farmer or a one-room school teacher. He was listed as Professor of Art in a brochure of the Ashland Seminary, thus earning some tuition. Two of his copies of Thomas Cole's famous Voyage of Life series now hang in the Bronck House Museum. The studio of Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of Art, is still preserved in Catskill. Peter Van Gelder allotted these two youngest sons land and farm stock. They formed a "company" to raise money for their tuition. Sometimes they took turns at school and farm for a semester or two. Later William tried to make a living organizing art classes in other localities.

Peter's oldest son, David, became a master builder of covered bridges made all of wood right down to the pegs that held them together. He also built an Octagon House of red brick, complete with cupola. This is the only one of these unique eight-sided houses in Greene County. It has been called the purest example of this type of architecture. The man who promoted them was not even an architect, but a phrenologist and author of many books, Orson Squires Fowler.

Jacob, next younger, made a name for himself as teacher, horticulturist, a specialist in commercial law and banking. His home was in Saugerties, from which town as well as from Catskill, the brothers often took a boat to New York City or to Albany.

William Myer was eleven years younger than his brother Jacob and wrote more letters to James Harvey than other relatives, friends, and fellow students. This favorite brother died when he was only 25 years of age, the first year James was in Yale College. Peter had brought a "farm in town" and built a brick house. James Harvey graduated in the Class of 1864, cum laude, and with a prize for mathe-

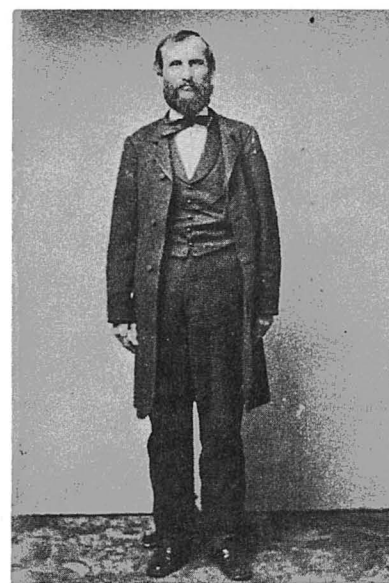
matics. One of the many friends who had enlisted in the Civil War, Bartholomew Mulligan, wrote a vivid description of the Battle of Chancellorsville in the Eastern theatre of the conflict. He wrote,

The moon shining with all its mild splendor, the constant blaze bursting forth from the mouths of numerous canon [sic] and the flash of thousands of muskets made a scene magnificently awful.

Meanwhile in the Western theater of war mystery surrounds the letters of Augustus Pelham, Jr. He is barely mentioned and only once in a letter from a student at Ashland Seminary. How did all his letters get bedded down with our family missives? There is no twig on the family tree where I can perch him. An old chest marked only PELHAM sat alone in a corner of my cellar. According to Charles Dornbusch, an authority on Civil War records, Pelham's 110th regiment from Oswego, New York, is poorly documented. These letters are full of names and make the war come very much alive even today both on the home front and on the battlefield.



Rebecca  
Pine  
Van Gelder



James  
Harvey  
Van Gelder

(continued on page 3)

The war and college over, James Harvey Van Gelder returned to Catskill and married his sweetheart of many years, Rebecca Pine. She had graduated from Charlottesville as valedictorian of her class in 1862. Together they established a private school in Catskill, but attendance was small, and the next year the family moved to a farm at Drummond Falls, Palenville. My mother, Carrie, was born there in 1865. They had planned to name her Abraham Lincoln.

The neighbors claimed Van Gelder was "too lazy to carry his own water," because he built a bucket line from the kitchen door to the falls. A reddish rock from the ruins of the old stone house is my "pet," sitting by the fireside. My favorite of all Grandma's paintings is of that stone house, and it hangs on my wall. The Van Gelder genealogy says,

In 1872 they returned to Catskill and James Harvey took up the study of law, obtaining his LLB from Albany Law School in 1876 and an A.M. from Yale in 1886. At that time he built a large three storey and basement residence on land bought from his mother and established a summer boarding house. This was quite a lucrative business in this area and many notables came from New York City and other places for the season. He increased his business along these lines and others and was especially interested in promoting a gravity water system for Catskill . . .

Having delved into photography, he and his wife and 17-year-old son, Arthur, made a Stereopticon Lecture Tour in 1890-91. First they visited relatives and other early pioneers who had gone "West." That meant central New York and going by oxcart or the Erie Canal. Then the trio followed the burgeoning industrial revolution, historic places and scenery through Ohio, Kentucky, and Alabama. They arrived in New Orleans during flood waters, just as the Mafia Gang had murdered Chief of Police Hennessy and bribed the jury, expecting to walk out free men the next day.

Highly respected city fathers called for action and crowds gathered and watched quietly while the proven murderers were lynched except for an 18-year-old boy and another with scanty evidence against him. Then all returned as quietly to their homes. No Italian vendor was molested. But there was high praise and extreme censure from the press across the whole country. Grandpa took pictures. One was printed in Leslie's Weekly which I found carefully preserved among all the memorabilia. Research revealed the Mafia was in control there for years. New Orleans was even its headquarters in the United States.

A torn scrap of paper tucked in one letter said, "Enjoyed aligator [sic] steak tonight. Will have hide shipped home." Wardle grandchildren used to haul it out from under Grandma's couch in the parlor and crawl under it working the great jaws to scare other little Wardles.

Another surprise developed from a letter written by Arthur to his sister back in Catskill. He had met a couple who had come across the Staked Plains of Texas in a "To Kansas or Bust" wagon. They reported desolation, rattlesnakes; they killed 30 in the first twenty days. Antelope were thick – sometimes 75 to 100 in a herd.

The Van Gelders only skirted the western part of this area which is really the Panhandle of Texas. Research revealed surprising facts of this comparatively small area. It was actually a microcosm of all I had ever heard of the Wild West. Famous in the region had been Coronado, Carson, Billy the Kid, the cattle wars, and much, much more.

After the scenic treasures of Colorado, the Van Gelders ended their lecture tour in Kansas where Grandma's brother, Smith Pine, had pioneered years before. Rebecca recalled her first visit just after Smith's wife had been burned to death, leaving two children. Rebecca had slept under a wagon on the prairie disturbed all night by "dogs barking." They were wolves and not far away.

Back home Arthur finished his senior year in high school and his father interested himself in community affairs. When Arthur entered the College of Mines at Columbia, his parents went to New York City to keep house for him. Carrie and Charles again managed the properties and Grandpa gave some lectures and researched three branches of the Van Gelder families some of whom had arrived in New Amsterdam as early as 1630.

Back in Catskill, the Water Works promotion continued. He was still at it when I was old enough to feel his keen disappointments when Carnegie and Rockefeller and many others were not interested "in backing it."

Most exciting and charming of all to me were the letters from my father's oldest brother, Francis R. Wardle. I still have a cut glass perfume bottle that he brought from Paris in the 1890's. But in 1898 he and Aunt Isabel wrote of cliff-hanging trips on horseback up the Siskayn Mountains of Oregon to the Jupiter Gold Mines that he managed for two years. Sometimes they had to tunnel out of the cabin when it was completely buried in snow. Aunt Isabel invited all the miners for such a Christmas dinner as they had never had before. "Always take along a red tablecloth," she wrote. "It helps, especially the first few days."

To recoup losses from the mine and repay investors, Uncle Frank signed up with the Portland Lumber Company and sailed for the Far East. They left San Francisco just as the infamous Boxer Rebellion broke out in China in 1900. They reached Japan nineteen days later. The news was not good. His well researched articles were printed in the PORTLAND OREGONIAN. But their personal experiences in these lands that were then still very strange indeed filled fascinating letters that all the families, including Grandpa, in the States shared.



In Nikko, Japan's loveliest summer resort still visited by the Emperor, Aunt Isabel stayed in safety while her husband made business trips to Tientsin, Port Arthur, and other coast cities. She tells of "charming Japanese children bowing deeply from the waist as they passed. Boys and girls bowed to each other. Mothers and daughters were dressed alike in bright kimonos and brighter obis. Little people carried lesser people strapped to their backs. I wish I could put windows in my letter so you could see what I am seeing and can never tell you."

Shanghai became another headquarters. They rented two rooms from an English family and had a Chinese boy to wait on them. Like the coolie class he spoke pidgin English. The only bit I remember learning was "Catchee Chow Chow Chop Chop" — get dinner, quickly.

Together they took a three-day sail to Hong Kong, another three days on to Manilla and then to Singapore. Swarms of boat people choked the waterways. At Calcutta, India, they cut short their planned sightseeing trip throughout India and left behind all the dirt and weary train rides.

A fat little envelope among the letters was labeled, "Pressed violets from the secret garden of the Dowager Empress in the Forbidden City." Peking had been hard to reach safely, but the Dowager Empress fled Peking just in time for their visit.

All these charming, enriching, and informative letters ceased when they set sail for San Francisco in April, 1902. A quick vacation in the Olympic Mountains of Washington, and they were soon settled in an apartment in San Francisco. He continued to manage his company's business there.

It is the family's good fortune that Uncle Frank compiled a Wardle Genealogy before his death in 1904. He went back to ancestors on his mother's side who were co-workers with the Wesleys. Grandpa Wardle at 18 years had come over in 1848 with his father, Hugh Wardle, a pharmacist, and put himself through medical school. But he had Wesleyan blood, too, and gave up a good medical practice in New York City, where my father had been born, to become a Methodist minister. He was very good at healing sick churches. When he served the Catskill church, Grandpa Van Gelder sat in the pews. Some years later, his daughter Carrie Van Gelder married the minister's son. Charles Athow Wardle was only 13 when his father was assigned by the bishop to another place, but Charles stayed on in Catskill. He slept on the counter of the drygoods store where he worked. My father's mother had died when he was only two and a half years old. His father remarried, but none of the first family of children were happy with the step-mother. It could hardly have been easy for her either to take over a family of six children.

The terrible San Francisco earthquake of 1906 forced Aunt Isabel to hurriedly pack a little bag with a change of underwear, a picture of her husband and her Bible. She fled across the Bay to Berkeley, where cousins lived. Later she stretched out a slender income and enriched her life by living in Florence, Italy. I practiced my high school French on her, and I remember especially a postcard of the quaint Ponte Vecchio that spans the Arno River. It is barnacled from end to end with shops hanging to its sides. It became my Mecca in 1953 when I left a tour group to Europe and headed for Rome to visit an Italian family.

All branches of the family had roots in this stony but beautiful Greene County. And so did my husband's ancestors. I lived for eight years in the old Fiero homestead. There was an old Dutch door opening into the "cellar kitchen" with its enormous fireplace. One can keep the lower half closed to keep out the farm animals, I suppose. I could not stand in the living room to play my violin without hitting the hand hewn beams in the ceiling. A parchment deed back in 1774 shows it was part of the old Loveridge Patent. Valentine Fiero, a French Huguenot, came over with our own Palatine ancestors in 1710. Some descendants still worship in the old Catsbaan Church where Van Gelder ancestors also attended.

The letters tell of happenings far afield and among the hills and valleys, mountains and streams, villages and farms, churches and schools. And always there were the stones and more stones. Many were long since gathered one by one from the fields and made into picturesque stone walls between fields and roads. Fields could be plowed and crops grown.

The shallow stony soil of this whole area had meant back breaking toil for farmers to be able to plow and raise crops. The picturesqueness of the stone walls only added to the beauty of the mountains and the river. The Catskill Mountain House, visited by celebrities from all over the world, and other famous boarding houses began to attract so many that less affluent were soon sharing the butter and cream, the fresh vegetables and eggs at many a farmer's table. Boarders became the farmers' crop. Grandpa Van Gelder's Cherry Hill House was built to attract visitors from far and near.

Then came the time when the lovely stone walls were shovelled into the maws of giant machines that ground them up for the good roads we seemed to value more. So we made the circle and have gradually come back to building beautiful retaining walls of field stone, patios and rock gardens, stone by stone.

*Editor's Note: The full-length copyrighted volume, from which the foregoing is the first chapter, is available through the author. Contact Mrs. Winifred W. Fiero at 267 Main Street, Catskill, New York 12414 (Tel. 518-943-2434). The sale price is \$19.95 plus sales tax and handling.*

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## "LET THE TROLLEYS COME!" – PART II

–Raymond Beecher

*The saga of the trolley craze in Greene County commenced with the Winter 1985 Journal in which was detailed the elaborate plans of the several incorporated companies to blanket the villages and hamlets with a network of street electric railways, a network which was to provide through passenger and light freight service into Albany, Schoharie, Delaware and Ulster counties. Only one plan came to fruition, that of the Catskill Electric Railway Company (later reorganized as The Catskill Traction Company). That line's goal was to reach Oak Hill via Cairo. Part I of the series ends with the line constructed and in operation to the top of Jefferson Hill and the Public Service Commission's approval for the extension in a westerly direction.*

*The Author*

The first year of full operation of the Catskill Electric Railway Company has its share of problems. By August 21, 1901, the line had carried 120,000 passengers from the date of its first regularly scheduled run. Sunday, June 22, was the busiest to date, over 1,200 fares being collected.

Rider concern soon surfaced as to the safety of the ride down steep Jefferson Hill. But those fears were stilled with the laying of a safety switch on site. The switch remained open with the exception of short intervals when cars were passing. "The conductor just before his car reaches it on the down trip, turns a lever which closes the switch. After the car has passed it opens automatically." The purpose of this safety device was that in the event of a down hill car rolling beyond the control of the motorman, it would run onto the switch and thence off onto the ground.

With the advent of street trolley line service, the upper Catskill Creek iron bridge (present Route 9-W) required special attention. Workmen were busy in January, 1901, strengthening that portion over Goat Island with heavy timbers. The rest was strengthened by large iron rods running underneath each side. The string pieces, girders, etc. were tightened; all the work done at the trolley company's expense.

The quarterly report, dated December 31, 1901, reveals the following information: The line's assets were valued at \$117,993, setting the cost of the road and equipment at \$114,255. Cash on hand amounted to \$104; funded debt was \$54,000; capital stock totalled \$60,000. The quarter's operating deficit was \$675. The annual report, dated June 30, 1902, indicated 176,595 passengers had been transported. It gave the following financial information:

Gross Earnings	\$8829
Operating Expenses	7627
Net Operating Profit	1202
Other Income	33

Gross Income	1235
Fixed Charges	4192
Year's Deficit	2957

It was soon apparent that to avert financial disaster, a wider potential for fares was essential. President William E. Stewart and others were in the Catskill area in mid March, 1902, to determine the feasibility of extending the line to Cairo. By 1903 the financial situation had further deteriorated much to the annoyance of those local investors who had tied up approximately \$86,000 of their capital. At this time a modified reorganization took place with president William E. Stewart bowing out to be replaced by W. C. Wood. By 1904 the line did manage to reach Leeds, an additional two miles (the actual end of the line was 800 feet westerly of Leeds Bridge). Tradition persists that the rails over the historic stone bridge were laid at night to forestall a confrontation with those vehemently opposed to the company's using the bridge.

Anything connected with the street railway was copy material for the local newspapers – finances, personnel, major and minor accidents, disruption of schedules as well as humorous incidents.

Runaway horses were a fact of life in nineteenth century America but to Greene County residents the risk was compounded to "life and limb" with the arrival of the Catskill Electric Street Railway. The *Examiner* within a few weeks of the first trolley run was reassuring its readers that Greene County horses were rapidly becoming accustomed to the trolleys in the village, "there being no runaways for two weeks." It complimented the motormen for stopping or slowing down when they observed a horse standing alone without being tied.

Among the earliest runaways was a team and wagon belonging to Robert Story of Broome Street. Being frightened by an approaching trolley car, the team "took off." The driver held onto the reins as best he could but the horses reared and broke the pole. On they went, colliding with a tree box near Howard Wilcox's Jewelry store, then striking a telephone pole, one horse being knocked down. On a Monday afternoon in February, 1901, a horse belonging to Hasbrock Holmes of Kiskatom became frightened by a trolley car near Welch's shoe store and in backing, slipped and fell on one of the shafts, breaking it.

In the spring of that year Elias J. Reynolds was driving near his residence on lower Main Street, the site of one of the trolley switches, when an approaching trolley car scared the horse. In its attempt to jump the fence, the animal was cut and Mr. Reynolds was thrown from his carriage and slightly injured.

In July the Catskill trolleys were again responsible for a runaway. The boarding house wagon of N. Luria, Jefferson, being driven by Mr. Luria, and having a young male passenger aboard, came to grief.

*(continued on page 6)*

## TROLLEYS *(continued from page 5)*

They were driving down Main Street when the trolley car came bounding along. The team took off, running up Main Street with wagon and occupants. Their first collision was with the grocery wagon of George W. Cowles in which were the Cowles sons, Noble P., Goodwin and Barent. All three were thrown from the grocery wagon and under the horses' feet. But except for minor damages to both wagons, men and beasts, serious injury was avoided.

Accidents between horsedrawn rigs and the trolley cars were periodically reported. In March, 1902, a rig in which was seated liveryman Thomas Horton collided with a trolley car on Upper Main Street. Damage to the rig was extensive but fortunately Mr. Horton escaped injury. In June of that year a south bound trolley car collided with a wagon in which were seated Gustav Schlenker and his father; that crash occurred in front of the Catskill National Bank, resulting in a badly damaged wagon for which the Schlenkers held the company responsible.

One accident case did reach the local courts. In April, 1902, the case of L. G. Adsit vs. Catskill Electric Railway Company had been tried before Judge Decker. Action was brought to recover \$150 for the killing of a horse on the upper town bridge. The verdict was returned for the plaintiff for the amount of damages he sought.

Accidents to and between the trolley cars were also publicized. Cars #3 and #4 of the line collided at the Long Dock on November 2, 1901, suffering minor damage. Spoor and Venus were the motormen. One Sunday afternoon in late December during the early years of operation two trolley cars passing each other on the turn out near the powerhouse, collided, breaking all the windows on the side of car #2. The first street car accident incurred by a single car occurred soon after operations started up. As trolley #3 was traveling down Jefferson Hill, the car's flange on the wheel struck a stone or other obstruction on the track, resulting in the car's derailment. Jacks were soon in operation and after a delay of about an hour, the trolley was back on the tracks and ready to proceed.

Mechanical failures or cars jumping the track for a variety of reasons often upset the scheduled runs, such as in August, 1902, when car #411 in charge of motorman Henry Place, jumped the track at the head of Main Street. The car #411 had earlier been pulled off the road when a broken trolley spring occurred on its eleven o'clock run from the West Shore depot, forcing passengers to wait until another car came from the shop. The newspapers even reported breakdowns as they did illnesses for local residents: "Car #414 is under the weather this week, suffering from flat wheels."

On a Monday morning in January the cars were delayed at the foot of Allen Street for some time by a load of cordwood which had slid from a sleigh belonging to Laban C. Rushmore, and covered the

tracks. Both the motorman and the conductor fell to with a will and helped remove the cordwood obstruction. That same month a teamster driving across the upper town iron bridge near the powerhouse with a loaded sleigh, caught one of the runners in the switch of the trolley track. A car coming rapidly down Jefferson Hill would have crashed into the stalled sleigh except for the alertness of the motorman who managed to stop the trolley a few feet away. The crew, with the aid of a crowbar, soon freed the sleigh.

Pedestrians were warned of the trolley's approach by the clanging of the car bell. This was not always effective. In February, 1902, a trolley operated by motorman Gay ran into a woman on Railroad Avenue. She denied any injury and wanted "no publicity in the paper!" Motorman Gay said he had sounded the gong repeatedly. That summer Mrs. Bert Webber ignored the warning of the bell and was brushed to the roadway by the steps of the trolley. Motorman O'Brien and Conductor Venus stopped to assist her.

Workmen themselves were not always alert to the dangers of the electrical current. A lineman, while connecting wires on Railroad Avenue, was knocked down several times and severely shocked by the electrical current passing through his body.

And then there was a close call for William Whitney, aged 12 years. In mid July, 1902, in attempting to retrieve his sister's hat which blew off her head on the top of Jefferson Hill, he jumped off the moving car and was thrown to the roadway with considerable force. Although suffering a fractured skull, he recovered with no lasting effects.

The first victim killed by the trolley line was cooper Horace Van Aken. He was preoccupied unloading a wagon load of barrel staves in front of his factory on upper Main Street, the wagon being partly on the trolley tracks. When Van Aken and his wagon were spotted by motorman John Ryan, of car #3, he immediately tried to stop but due to the winterlike conditions which made the rails slippery, he was unsuccessful. Earl Van Syke, the conductor, also testified as to the facts of the accident; the trolley company was held not responsible for Van Aken's death. A few minutes after this serious accident, another car running down Jefferson Hill to the car house did not catch the switch and crashed into another car on the upgrade, both being badly damaged.

Another fatal accident was reported on one Sunday afternoon in September, 1909. Wilbur Finch who had worked on the line as a conductor all summer, but not on duty at the time, attempted to "catch a ride" as the car was moving at Leeds. He was killed by a fall as he attempted to get aboard.

Humorous stories about the trolley line and its passengers were continually making the rounds. A few are mentioned:

*(continued on page 7)*



On Main Street near Valanti's fruit store this Tuesday past, in the afternoon, a young couple of rural appearance strolled hand in hand, he about 23 and she younger. Suddenly the flat-wheeled car came along with its bumpy bump and stopped at the corner of William Street. "Oh Henry, she said, "Let's take a ride." Henry looked at her and said, "Naw, the darn thing is busted. I promised you I would take good care of you and I'm goin' to do it. It ain't safe in that car but I'll buy you some peanuts."

Conductor Ray Castle told another. A farmer stopped at the hotel in Jefferson, put his team in the stable and walked down toward the trolley line. He stood there for a minute or two, looking at the wire overhead. "Have a ride downtown, sir" said the conductor. He slowly shook his head. "Nope." "You're not afraid are you? There's no danger" said Castle angling for a fare. "There ain't hey — that there wire ain't big enough to hold a car coming down Haight [Jefferson] hill and I know it. Some day it will break and then where will you be? Nope, walking is good enough for me." And the old man beat a hasty retreat as if the conductor would compel him to ride against his will.

On a Sunday night in March, 1901, conductor Fred Kerr collected a fare from an inebriated male passenger. "Shay, put me off at Smith's Landing" he said and started to fall asleep. Kerr tried to inform him the car did not go to Smith's Landing (Cementon). "Why not?" "Because the road isn't built that far." "All right, go ahead and build it, I ain't in no hurry. I'll wait here." Finally Kerr persuaded him to get off and go to a local hotel.

From the commencement of the line's operation, employees on the cars were adept at creating rider good will, hoping it would increase passenger traffic. Conductor Castle, in March of 1901, became so upset at the depth of the mud at Jefferson which was discouraging riders without rubber boots, that he soon conceived the idea of carrying pails of ashes from the powerhouse on each trip. Gradually he had a solid crossing from the sidewalk to the street car terminal.

George H. Peters, formerly of Honey Hollow and now residing in Florida, tells one. The Peters family, father, mother and children, had left the Day Line steamer at Catskill Point and had taken the trolley to Leeds. Enroute, the father happened to look back along the track and spotted a large trunk on the roadbed. It only took a few seconds for him to realize their trunk had somehow fallen off. But the motorman was "all kindness" and when alerted backed up the trolley for the Peters to reload the trunk. John Story met the travelers at Leeds with team and wagon to transport the Peters and the "fallen" trunk to Place's Corners near Gayhead.

There were few reported instances of fare avoidance. For some unknown reason John Webster and his son refused to pay their fares one Sunday evening. The conductor had police officers Cooke and Cargill arrest them "for defrauding the trolley company of ten cents." Justice Burke discharged the

Websters with a stern warning.

Heavy snowfalls and/or slippery rails were the usual winter problem and at times brought the line's operation to a halt. Early in December, 1901, the cars just stopped running, one being stalled on the track in front of DuBois' drug store on Main Street, while another was left abandoned on the switch at the head of Main Street. The tracks were not opened until mid-morning of the following day. One of the worst storms came in January, 1904. That storm caused a two-day shutdown for the western section of the line.

Providing dependable electrical power was a continuing problem. Trolley cars were thrown off schedule when breakdowns occurred in the powerhouse at the foot of Jefferson Hill. Within a year of the first trolley run, it became obvious to the company's officers that a more dependable, economically viable source of power was essential to the successful operation of the street railway. In July, 1902, President Young, representing the traction interests, contracted with the Catskill Illuminating and Power Company to furnish electrical energy to operate the cars; the agreement was for ten years. Within a few weeks that power company was installing new dynamos costing \$3,500. The powerhouse at the foot of Jefferson Hill was scheduled for abandonment, its machinery to be retained for a new site when the line was extended from Leeds to Cairo. By the year 1912 power was coming from the Woodstock (Cairo) generating plant.

As income failed to meet expenses during the first decade of the twentieth century, every effort was made to increase the number of passengers. The Summer Time Table for 1908 stressed the fact that the cars would leave Catskill Point every 30 minutes on the even hour and half hour from 5:30 a.m. until 11 p. m. All runs would go through to Leeds except the 11 p.m. car which would run to the car barn only. The 10:30 p.m. car would wait for the close of the last performance at the Nelida Theatre. Cars would leave Leeds every 30 minutes on the even and half hours from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. On Sunday afternoon the schedule was 20 minutes and the same for special occasions. Riders had no cause for complaint at the frequency of the runs but unfortunately there just weren't enough passengers.

The Hamilton Trust Company, representing major creditors, finally brought legal action against the Catskill Electric Railway Company. Bondholders were looking to the sale of the mortgaged property to recoup a portion of their investment and overdue interest. The New York State Supreme Court, recognizing the insolvency of the corporation, appointed one Captain Murphy as receiver. He was followed in April, 1909, by George W. Holdridge of Catskill. It was the order of the court that the mortgaged assets of the Catskill Street Railway Company, or so much of them as needed to discharge





## VEDDER LIBRARY NOTES

□◇ Mrs. Polly Sherman of New Baltimore and Florida has augmented the Edward Ely Sherman Collection with the donation of two manuscripts of area importance. The first is an original 1807 detailed General Order for the formation of special "minute man" companies should war with Great Britain break out. This order came down to Brigadier General Van Slyck. National ill feeling was at its height what with the impressment of American seamen and the capture of the American frigate Chesapeake. President Jefferson finally imposed the Embargo Act of 1807. The second document, also a militia one, is the appointment of Martin G. Van Bergen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel of militia and is signed by Governor Daniel Tompkins.

□◇ The Society has acquired the printed 1880's copy of Isaac Van Loan's *Some Recollections of An Athens Man in Southern Prisons*. Van Loan enlisted in Company A, 9th Regt., NY Volunteers on 16th December 1861 and later re-enlisted in November 1863 for three years or for the war's duration.

□◇ Catherine H. Campbell's *New Hampshire Scenery*; a dictionary of nineteenth-century artists of New Hampshire mountain scenery has been catalogued. It is of interest to Greene County residents since Mrs. Campbell includes works by Cole, Stone and other Hudson Valley artists.

□◇ The Revolutionary War collection has been strengthened with the purchase of *Rivington's New York Newspaper; Excerpts from a Loyalist Press, 1773-1783*. The index of names is useful since many Americans captured in battle are listed, including Colonel Ely, father of Doctors John and Worthington Ely of Coxsackie and New Baltimore.

□◇ The Goodwin-Albright scrapbooks, mentioned heretofore, are now only a part of a larger donation from the same family source. The latest includes notebooks and papers collected by Eva Goodwin, formerly of Coxsackie.

□◇ The gravestone inscriptions from a small cemetery on a farm on the High Falls Road, town of Saugerties (but close to the Catskill town line), have been copied by Kenneth Van Vechten Parks. The cemetery is on the Bach farm; the burials relate to the Everett family. Mr. Parks has supplied us with a copy of his findings.

□◇ A number of 19th century Bible Records have been copied by the Wiltwyck Chapter, DAR, Kingston. Through the cooperation of Mrs. Shirley A. Mearns, their Genealogical Records Chairman, we now have a set at the VML. Surnames include Myers, DeMott, Brott, Winne, Matteson, Westerfelt, Carlock-Vanderbeck and Combs.

□◇ *Researching the History of Your School: Suggestions for Teachers and Students* (1985) produced by the New York State Archives has been catalogued.

□◇ A Dutch Salisbury Bible, two New Testaments (one German and one Dutch), plus a varied assortment of family papers have come from Mrs. Trudy Griffith, Port Alleghany, Pa. To be known as the Salisbury-Newkirk Collection, the gift is in memory of the donor's grandmother, Annie Newkirk Hunter. Transfer to the Society and its Vedder Memorial Library was arranged by Trustee Emeritus Ruben Garcia who now resides in the Newkirk Homestead, Leeds.

□◇ The Trustees of the Society approved the special acquisition of the Leonard R. Bronk letters written from both Kinderhook Academy and later from Union College, as well as several essays and speeches dating from the years 1833-1834. This grandson of Judge Leonard Bronk died in early adulthood, probably of consumption, as did his cousins, sons of Maria Ely and Leonard Bronk, Jr. The writer was a son of John L. Bronk, the attorney of Coxsackie, and Alida Conine. The family home still stands (red brick, federal structure) junction Van Dyck and Mansion Streets, Coxsackie.

□◇ A well organized and duplicated volume *A Record of the King Hill Cemetery, Greene County, NY* (Surprise-Result Road off Route 81, Town of Greenville) has been prepared by Marcia Stewart and Robert Losee of Lincoln, Nebraska. The 13-page publication includes a good explanation of the site, a sketch of the cemetery, the inscriptions, an index of names as well as a cross reference of maiden names. The compilers have presented this library with two copies after visiting the VML during the summer of 1985, utilizing available Losee material including the Peters' new volumes *Powells of the Hudson Valley*. They also spent some hours at the cemetery itself.

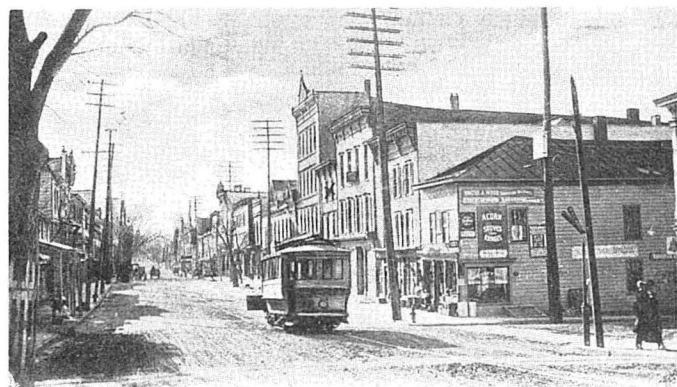
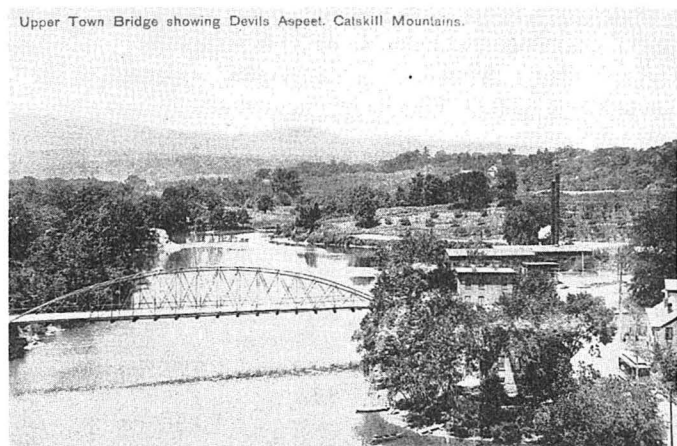
□◇ A manuscript volume of major importance in the history of the village of Catskill comes from Mr. and Mrs. Albert Antonelli, Jefferson Heights, Catskill. In renovating an old house they found the volume behind a wall, apparently having fallen down from attic storage long ago. It is the minute book of The Catskill Mechanical Society for the years 1827-1844. A Journal article will be forthcoming due to the Antonelli's generous gesture.

□◇ Few aspects of the Society's library holdings have grown more rapidly than the photographic files. The latest gift of an extensive collection, relating primarily to Coxsackie, has come from Frances Adams and Ellen Whitbeck, long time members and active supporters of the Society. The gift is in memory of their father, Dayton B. Smith, who was active in business circles in Coxsackie and also in Greene County politics, he serving as a supervisor from this township.

□◇ And from Mr. Tryon, Rte. 385, Coxsackie, has come an early 1900 vintage photo of the Coffin pillared brick mansion, at Coffin Bay, Athens.

(continued on page 10)

**TROLLEYS** (continued from page 8)



(To be continued in Summer 1986 issue)

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**VEDDER LIBRARY NOTES** (continued from page 9)

□◇ And from Mrs. Howard Waldron, Gayhead, R. D., via Mabel P. Smith, the Society's historian, has come a collection of out-of-print volumes. These include Mrs. Vedder's *Historic Catskill*, Elmer Davis' *Souvenir Views* booklet, and a backup copy of Jessie Van Vechten Vedder's *History of Greene County*.

□◇ Research from both the United States and from abroad on Dr. John Frederick Tolley comes from William W. Tolley, Port Edwards, Wisconsin. This ancestor came from the Electorate of Hanover in 1753 and settled in the Loonenburg (Athens) area. The research also focuses on allied lines of John Pine and the Volands.

□◇ Levitt C. Powell's military appointment as Second Lieutenant of Infantry, US Army, dated October 31, 1918, has come from an estate sale in Hannacroix, NY.

□◇ Records of the Catskill Mountain Gospel Fellowship organization, including a chaplain's volume written by the Reverend Harold Nixon (NYS Training School for Girls at Hudson) have been deposited by Dr. and Mrs. Augustine of Catskill.

□◇ The genealogical research folder on Rappleyeas who resided in Schoharie, Ulster and Greene counties is much thicker through the efforts of Kenneth Van Vechten Parks of Catskill.

□◇ This past winter Lisa Turan, a volunteer library assistant, has been typing 3 x 5 cards listing information from the county's *Property Record of 1813*. This volume, now in fragile condition, is a basic genealogical reference work. Researchers will now be able to refer to the cards instead of the manuscript volume.

□◇ The Hudson River artists are a continuing topic of research. Howat's *The Hudson River and Its Painters* is a basic volume. A copy from George Bogardus of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is now on the oversize shelves.

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